

of the fallen spirits in the debate in *Paradise Lost*: but he chose instead to make the incident the occasion for a new edition of the poem with substantial variations from the original, and in a dedicatory address to Lord Stanley prefixed to this edition he thus explained the variations : —

The *Revolutionary Epick* is printed from the only copy in my possession, and which, with slight exceptions, was corrected in 1837, when, after three years' reflection, I had resolved not only to correct but to complete the work. The corrections are purely literary. The somewhat sudden accession of her Most Gracious Majesty occasioned in that year a dissolution of Parliament, and being then returned to the House of Commons, in which I have since sat without an interval, these dreams for ever vanished.

No one who has read *Contarini* will think it strange that the dreams should have visited him. Disraeli was indeed something of a poet, though his proper medium was neither the prose poetry of *Alroy* nor the heroic verse of the *Revolutionary Epick*. 'I am only truly great in action'; when he wrote that, his insight into character did not fail him. He carried into the field of action indeed a good deal of the spirit of the poet and the artist, but action was his true province all the same. For supreme greatness in the field of creative literature he had neither the self-restraint nor the self-devotion that are needed; and though he could make verses, he had none of the peculiar and divine gift which gives to verses the quality of lasting poetry. No one need be surprised then at the failure of the *Epick*. The conception, if not, according to his own word, sublime, has a certain largeness which a happier execution might have raised to the pitch of grandeur, and which even as it is gives an air of spaciousness to the poem. But the execution, on which, as he saw, all would depend, falls far short of the conception. Disraeli's verse is fluent, but where we look for poetry we find only the dull and cloudy rhetoric into which a man invariably falls who